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ABSTRACT

One in a series of books intended to help children improve their critical analytical skills, the document examines the concept of time in light of theories of philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Dewey. The document is presented in three chapters. Chapter one offers a critical analysis of time from the perspective that time is an unknown and strange entity that should be observed from every possible viewpoint. Questions about time are posed and answered. For example, "Can you see time?" "Can time be in a hurry?" "Is time a relation of changes?" and "Is there a present time?" Answers to these and other questions generally involve review of frequently-made statements about time. Chapter two discusses references to time in Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland." Entitled "Having a Good Time with Time in 'Alice in Wonderland'", the chapter reviews how and why Alice, The Hatter, March Hare, the Queen of Hearts and the book's other main characters read watches, measure long periods of time, waste time, measure the relationship between time and objects, and determine what period of time a while might be. Chapter three offers jokes about time in categories including context deviation humor, contradiction humor, deviation from the familiar, ignorance humor, taking things literally humor, metaphor humor, and substitution humor. (DB)

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TIME

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS FOR CHILDREN

by
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Time: A Critical Analysis for Children, 1978
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BOOKS FOR PROFESSIONALS AND ADULTS

Rational Love, 1978
Humor: A Comprehensive Classification and Analysis, 1978
Wittgenstein, Language and Philosophy, 1970
Death: An Interdisciplinary Analysis, 1974
Emotion, 1974
Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History, 1971
Essays on Metaphor, 1972
An Analysis of Metaphor, 1971 (Distributed by The Language Press, Published by Mouton, Netherlands)
Philosophical Pictures, 1971

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Models of Ancient Greek Philosophy (Vision, England) 1971
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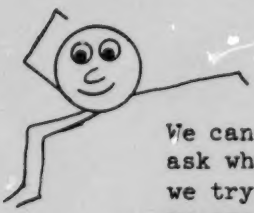
Let me introduce myself. I'm the thoughts people sometimes have when they read. We create a new world as we change our ideas about such words as "time." You may draw some of your own pictures as you read.



We can tell time, but we seldom ask what time really is. Once we try to answer the question we are in for a surprise.

TIME

"What sort of things do *you* remember best?" Alice ventured to ask.

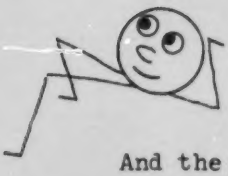
"Oh, things that happened the week after next," the Queen replied in a careless tone. "For instance, now," she went on, "there's the King's Messenger. He's in prison now being punished; and the trial doesn't even begin till next Wednesday; and of course the crime comes last of all." *(Alice in Wonderland)*

For some fun, you may want to first read the time jokes at the end of the book, then come back and read this.

We have clocks and watches. We learn to wind these watches and set the clocks so the alarm goes off. We say, "It's one o'clock" (one of the clock). We learn to tell time.

Time seems like such a simple idea. We look at a clock and see what time it is. But *what is time?* Where is it? Have you ever seen it?

The philosopher, Wittgenstein, wrote, "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language."



And the philosopher, John Dewey, wrote, "To be playful and serious at the same time is possible and defines the ideal mental condition."

Time is a familiar idea, perhaps too familiar. It is so well-known that we fail to ask what it is. Perhaps it would be better for a moment to pretend that time is unknown, strange, and certainly much less familiar. We may pretend that we are all children learning about time for the first "time."

First of all, we hear some strange things said about time. People say, "Time flies." But how do they know that? Isn't that a joke which they take seriously by mistake? How does time fly? Suppose your friend says, "I have a bird in a cage and it sings and flies." Then you could perhaps say, "I have something which flies too, but it is not in a cage." "What is it?" he asks. "Time," you reply. Your friend may then ask, "Does it sing too?" Well, does time sing? To say that time flies or sings is a funny thing to say.

But what else do people say about time? "Time marches on," they say. Oh, no! This is no

What is time, anyway?

It's probably just something people invented.

help at all. Does it have big feet? Where is the drum? This is getting confusing.

Well, then, they say we "save time," or "lose time." Hurrah, this is better! It gives me an idea. Suppose we buy some can-openers and other "time-saving" tools, and hurry when we do things. Perhaps we can save so much time that we never grow old. But is this good thinking? Do you really save time as you save money? You put money in a piggy bank. You put in pennies, nickels, dimes or quarters. Suppose you tried to save time in the same way and put seconds, minutes, hours and days in the piggy bank. What would the pig think? To try to do so would be a mistake. It is no way to fatten up a pig. And it is no use saying, "It takes time to fatten a pig." That is wrong. It takes food and money. (Please do not put food in your piggy bank. That, also, is the wrong thing to put in it.)

Lewis Carroll, in one of his books, gave this tale about "saving" and "wasting" time.

"In *your* country," Mein Herr began with a startling abruptness, "what becomes of all the wasted Time?"

Lady Muriel looked grave. "Who can tell?" she half-whispered to herself. "All one knows is that it is gone - past recall!"

"Well, in *my* - I mean in a country *I* have visited," said the old man, "they store it up: and it comes in *very* useful, years afterwards!...By a short and simple process - which I cannot explain to you - they store up the

Follow this line

Did time go by as you followed the line? If so how do you know? Did time travel along the line?

useless hours: and, on some *other* occasion, when they happen to *need* extra time, they get them out again."

To think that time is a thing, is a mistake. But, as you see, we often talk about it as if it were a thing - something you could carry in your pocket, or lose. People say, "We lost a lot of time." It would be a mistake to reply, "Well, I'll help you look for it. Where do you think you lost it? My mother always snaps my gloves to my coat so they won't get lost." But, no, time is not like mittens snapped to your coat. It is nothing you can find or lose.

What else do people say about time?

"Time hangs heavy on my hands."

"Spend time."

"Have a good time."

Think about some of the other things we usually say about time. One thing we say is, "Time passes." That sounds alright. But slow down. Read these words again, "Time passes." Hmmm! Can you hear it pass? Does it make a hum? No. It doesn't do that. The tick-tock you hear is just the mechanical clock. It's not time. Time does not tick and it does not tock.

Does time "pass" as an automobile passes? You follow the auto as it goes by. Do you follow time as it goes by? Do your eyes and head move as time goes by? Then perhaps, time does not pass as an auto passes.

Who or what would time pass anyway? And

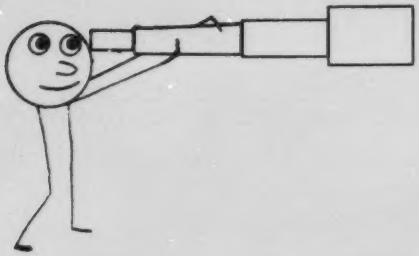
People often seem to misuse language without knowing it.

what's its hurry? Can time be in a hurry? Nevermind, we will see about that later. Suppose you walk across the room. Does time pass you? Suppose you walk very, very, slowly. Does time pass you? Well, then, suppose you run as fast as you can. Would you pass time? Could you beat time then? But we will hear nothing about "beating time." It is probably against the law. Certainly, we should not "kill time." We should not even "waste time." Let's try another thing. Walk across the room again. Does time "go by" as you walk across the room? Are two things walking across the room? - You and old man time? (Did they confuse *old man* time with *grandfather* clock?) Walk fast, then look quickly behind you. Do you see time following? Can he keep up? Is he marching or flying? Is he just fattening the pigs?

Are you getting confused? So am I. But there is no point in solving a problem unless there is a problem to solve. And it looks as if the statements people usually make about time are jokes in disguise. What is said about time is familiar, and seems to make sense, but is very confusing when we think about it.

Let's then begin. We are all children and want to know what time is. First, let's ask how we "tell" time. Is telling time like telling your cat to get off a fence? Of course, not. Indeed, not. Telling time is not like telling a story. It's

We seem to think we
can actually see time -
as if with a strong
telescope we could
see it.



not like telling a tale. It's not like telling a cat, or a tale.

Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* considers telling a tale in the following way:

"Mine is a long and a sad tale," said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

"It *is* a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this: -- "Fury said to

I once thought I
tasted time.

Telling time is not like telling a tale.

What is telling time? To answer this question, just look and see what you do when you tell time. This sounds easy, but it will be hard. It is hard partly because it is too easy. We want to make much more out of time than there is.

We say, for example, that clocks measure time. If so, we have two things: 1) a clock 2) time. This sounds familiar. The clock measures or tells time, or at least, that's what people say. Are they right? What evidence do we have for time being separate from clocks? We said already that time does not fly, march, walk, sing, pass, or stuff pigs. We do not see, hear, smell, or touch time in itself.

People talk of time as if it were an invisible fluid all around us. They say everything is in time and space. It is as if we could swim in time as we can swim in water. It is a big as-if.

It seems that we have no evidence that there is such a thing as time. There are only clocks. And if there is no time, clocks cannot measure time. Clocks do not tell time. They tick but do not talk.

Now, haven't we got you in a puzzle? 1) You have always been told that there is such a thing as time, but now 2) you are lead to see that there is no such thing as time. This is a conflict or paradox. The way to resolve it is not to listen

We are so used to thinking of time as an invisible thing that it is hard to get rid of the idea.

to either side. One person says this, the other says the opposite. It's no good following authorities who disagree. The solution is simple. You will have to decide for yourself. Just listen to all the facts and arguments, and then come to your own decision. You may, of course, change your view as you learn of new facts and arguments. To take this approach is to become a critical thinker.

We have made three points so far:

1) What people usually say about time is somewhat funny.

2) We do not see, hear, touch or feel time.

3) If there is no time, clocks cannot tell time.

"Smashing!" you say. But, no. We did not smash time. You can only smash a watch or clock. You cannot smash what you cannot find. Well, that's not quite right, is it? You can smash something which you can find. You cannot smash something that can't be found. Time is not a bird or a bug. But, you are right. We are trying to take the usual idea of time away from you.

"It does seem strange," you say. "I was always taught that clocks tell time. Now you tell me clocks don't tell time. I'm just little, don't confuse me until I grow up." That's right, clocks do not tell time. It is just the opposite of what we were always told. Now, if you go into a clock store you can ask if their clocks ac-

I should be more objective
and just look and see what
I do when I tell time.

curately tell time. If they say, "Yes," tell them that there is no such thing as time in itself. Thus, their clocks cannot tell time.

How, then, does telling time work? Again, look and see what you actually do when you tell time. First of all, you do not have two things, a clock and time. You have just one thing, a clock. We cannot compare a clock with time, because we do not know where to look for time. Suppose a Swiss watchmaker makes a mechanical watch with wheels and hands which move. How does he know if the watch tells time? Does he look up into the sky to watch time pass, and then set the watch by that? No. There are only clouds in the sky, no time. And watches do not "tell" clouds.

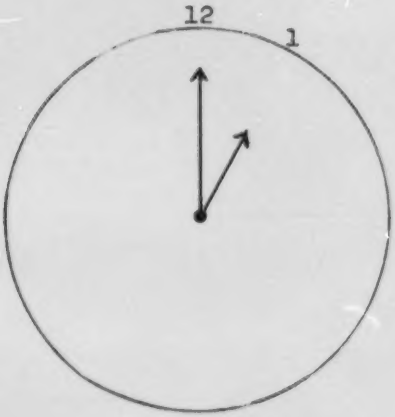
If you observe carefully, you will see that time is never a part of telling time. Here is how we tell time: We look at a clock. Astounding, right? There's more. We look at a clock and see that the "hands" move. Actually, they are just pieces of metal which move. It may even seem silly for someone from another culture to see these pieces of metal move on our watch. Perhaps, it is like a person with a propeller on his head.

We first look at a watch with its moving metal pieces. When these pieces line up on certain numbers we say certain things. For example, if the short fat "hand" is on "1" and the

"Clocks don't tell time." That's the opposite of what I've always been told.

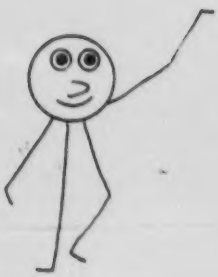
Stop putting the clock ahead to midnight. It's making me sleepy.

long thin hand is on "12" we then say "It is one o'clock."



Do not become bored with this. After all, didn't we put a nice picture of a clock here for you to look at? Look again at that picture. You will notice an amazing thing about this picture-clock. It is always one o'clock. If you not believe *that*, come back tomorrow and check. At least, it hasn't changed for me yet.

It is no good for a watch to be always one o'clock, always the same time. We have to give all of the other numbers a chance. We forgot to tell you that the hands are moving. We can't show you that in our picture. You will just have to imagine that the hands are moving. The hands move or change to line up with other



Time doesn't measure change,
it is a relation of changes.
Time is nothing in itself.

25

numbers on the fixed "face" of the watch. We then say other things, such as, "It is two o'clock," "three o'clock," "four o'clock," and so on up to the highest number, "twelve o'clock." We could say, "one o'watch" instead, but we don't.

We described some things we actually do when we "tell time." We see the "hands" of the watch move or change. On this analysis, all we mean by time is the hands of the watch moving next to fixed marks and numbers on the "face" of the watch. Time, then, is just this change. Time is only change.

There is no time separate from clocks, and all we mean by time is the change of the moving "hands" on the "face" of the clock.

Now, to make this clearer, we cannot say the watch measures time. There are not two things, the changing hands of the watch, as well as time. There is only the changing hands of the watch. The watch change *is* time, is the standard of time, it does not measure time. Let's see how that works.

Suppose we wish to time a runner. We just relate the change of the hands on the watch with the change of the runner. To time something is just to relate one change to another. *Time is a relation of changes.*

Because time is change, whenever we have a time word we can instead substitute a change

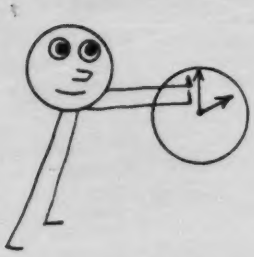
"Timing a runner" is just comparing the change of the runner with the change of the clock. There is no time in itself.

word. For example, clocks tell change, clocks are standards of change, clocks measure the change of a runner. Clocks are just standards of change. What do we mean by that? We mean that we just let clock change be the standard for measuring other kinds of change. *We could let any change be the standard of time (change).*

For example, a sundial is a measure of time (other changes) because the shadow moves around the face of the dial, as the hands move around the face of a clock. We can let any change be the standard of time (other changes). We measure the hardness of a boiling egg by means of sand moving through an hourglass. We could put equal, even marks on a candle and as the candle burns down (changes) let that be the standard by which to measure other changes. That is, it is arbitrary what change we use to measure time (other changes) by. On the other hand, some standards are more useful or practical.

When metal rusts it is a change and could be used as a way of measuring other changes. We do say of a very rusty piece of metal that it is old. Some Indians and other people use the moon as the standard of time (change). Suppose that, instead of a clock, we chose a banana. We then measure other changes by the banana. Instead of saying, "one o'clock" we say "one

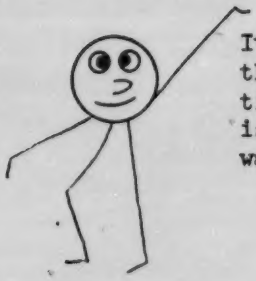
We choose some kind of change to be the standard of change. So if that stops we lose our standard. That is, if the clock stops, "time" stops.



o'banana." Instead of a watch, we carry a banana around in our pocket. When the banana develops brown spots we say, "It is getting spotty (late)." When the banana is very brown or even black, then we know there has been much change (or very late, indeed). But we know something else. We know that we are walking around with a slimy, black, inedible banana in our pocket. It is not very practical to choose a banana as a standard of (time) change. But we could do that. You could use the change of a growing hair on your head as the standard of time (change).

Now for a test of what has just been said. It may be difficult and, if so, read through it anyway. It will be over in "no time." Here is the test. It was said that we could let any change be the standard by which we judge other changes. That is all we mean by time. Now, *if there is only one clock in the world, and if the clock stops, does time stop?* Do we have you puzzled again? Good. Which do you think is the correct answer? Why do you think so?

The answer is: if the clock stops, time stops. This is because this clock *is* time, is the *only* standard, and if the standard stops, time stops. Another way to see this is to use change in place of time. This gives us "If the clock change stops, the clock change stops." Then it is clear that time is just any change we say it is, and



It's funny how I still keep on thinking that there must be some invisible time. It's just that this old idea is so familiar. I guess I'm brain-washed in some ways.

that there is no time, just a standard of change.

If our standard clock stops, there are still other changes going on in the world. The clock is rusting, bananas are becoming brown, and pigs are getting fat. That will still happen. But the rusting, browning, fattening are not the standards of time (change). If the standard stops, time stops. On the other hand, we could immediately choose another clock or a new standard of time (change). If this test was too hard, you may have to read it again, think about it, or talk about it. If you still cannot understand it, keep reading and come back to it later. Or, keep reading, forget about it, and enjoy the rest of the book. That's not a bad idea, either.

What's next? Well, if time is change, we never become old. Aren't you glad you read on, now? You will never get old in time. Perhaps you should stop here, because although you do not get old in time, you do change. What we actually mean now by "becoming old" is "becoming changed." Remember to put "change" wherever you have a time word such as "old." Thus, people do not become old, they become changed. They become taller, stronger, wiser, or more grey. They become wrinkled, or even sometimes, better looking. To know that time is change, helps us to better understand all

Everyone says that time passes, but where is it going?

We should keep an eye on it. We need a watch dog on a watch chain.

kinds of time words.

Now we can explain what we mean by "time passes." It is not time that passes, but change that changes. When we walk across a room, there is a change, not a passage of time. And the change does not happen in time, because there is no time. Change is just something we can see, or feel, hear or smell. Change is not a fixed thing, but things in motion. *Time is things in motion.* Time does not fly, but time is rather a bird flying. One sort of answer to the question, "What is time?" is, "Time is a leaf in the wind," "Time is a candle burning down," "Time is sand pouring through an hourglass," "Time is the shadow moving around a house."

Some say that time passes or goes in one direction. But if time is change, it does not go in one or many directions. Time is not an arrow. It does not go forward or backward. There can be no time-machine, because there is no time. There can only be a change machine. Thus, many or all of the time-machines in science fiction are based on a mistaken view of time.

Also, time cannot pass or go in one direction, because time does not pass or go at all. So also, time cannot go fast or slow. There is no time barrier. It is not the case that the faster you go, the younger you remain. There is no time dimension. The only dimension is a dimension of change. The 4th dimension (after length,

The three dimensions are length, width and depth. The fourth dimension is not time. It is change. To see the 4th dimension just move this page and watch me move.

width and depth) is just the dimension of movement or change.

When we ask what time is, we are often given tricky answers. People do not often ask themselves what time is, so they may not be able to tell anyone else what it is. They repeat slogans such as "time passes," "clocks measure time," etc. Or, they may define time words by other time words. For example, one may say, "Time is just minutes, hours and seconds." This definition does not tell us much because we need to know what minutes, seconds and hours are. This is sometimes called a circular definition. If we do not know what time is, we do not know what a minute is.

It is also circular or tricky to say, "Time is *when* you get up." "When" is a time word and we need to know what a "when" is. Ask your teacher what a "then," "ago," and "when" are. If he or she says these are time words, you are still tricked, because you need to know what time is.

It is circular to say, "There is a past because I remember it." "Remember" is a word which means "past idea." Thus, "There is a past because I remember it," says only "There is a *past* because I have a *past* idea of it." That is circular. It assumes what it is supposed to prove.

Circular statements assume what is supposed to be proved. It's like saying minutes exist, now let's see what time is. But if we know what a minute is we already know what time is.

Lewis Carroll, in one of his books, gave the following account:

"I'm sure *my memory* only works one way," Alice remarked. "I can't remember things before they happen."

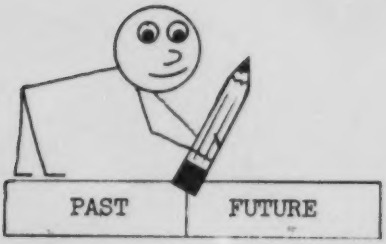
"It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards," the Queen remarked.

It is circular to say, "There is a future because it *will* appear." "Will" means future. The statement is circular. Present tense, past tense, and future tense words are time words. They are like words such as, when, ago, then, began, remember, went, will go, and so on.

"Time is change," is not a trick or circular definition. By "when," you refer to a certain change, or changes of objects. Thus, you can eliminate circular definitions of time by putting change words in place of time words.

"Time is past, present, and future." This is tricky or circular because we need to know what past, present, and future are. If there is no time, then there is no past, present and future! That should make anyone start thinking twice. How could there not be even a present? We will have some fun with you now. You will never be the same again.

You think that there is a present. You were told that. You were also told that there is a past and a future. The future is said to become the present and the present goes into the past.



If you always have future becoming past, then the present drops out. We can erase the dividing line of the present.

That sounds pretty good, doesn't it? If you think so, then listen to this.

The future always becomes the present and past. Can you think of any time "when" it didn't? No, people say future always does. If so, when is "now"? We say that now, or the present, is that which we know best. Better take this one slowly. By "now" we sometimes mean this year, this month, or this week. That won't do because, in a year, the future is becoming the past "all the time." A year is not a now. It contains too many futures becoming presents and pasts.

Try again. By now I mean what I mean when I say, "Now." No good. As soon as you say "N" on "Now," the future has become the past. We must make the present even smaller yet. Let's make now be a second. Nice try, but not good enough. Even in a second, the future becomes the present and past. Then, what does all this mean? It means that no matter how small an instant you take, the future becomes present and past in it. It means that you never get hold of a now. *You never get hold of the present.* All you have is future becoming past. *There is no present time as such.* We began thinking that the present and now are what we know best. We end up thinking they are what we know least. This is sometimes called the false, "specious," or disappearing present.

Queen: "The rule is jam tomorrow and jam yesterday—but never jam *today*."

"It *must* come sometime to 'jam today,' Alice objected. *(Alice in Wonderland)*

I can't have a past image because the past is gone. I can only have a present image.

Why does it disappear like that? Is it a magic trick of nature? No, *it is man tricking himself with time words which he misuses.* The words past, present and future are misused. In the first place, if there is no time in itself (separate from change), there is no past, present and future (separate from change). To talk of *the* Past, *the* Present, *the* Future as if they name things, or places, is a mistake. We say we go into *the* Future. But, have you ever seen a bus with a sign on it "To the Future," or "To the Past," or "You're here. The Present."? You cannot arrive in the Past or Present because they are not places.

The mistake is not to realize that past, present, and future, only refer to types of changes of things. They are not things or places in themselves. The present is only certain kinds of changes. Time is change, and so the present is a kind of change. The past and future are different kinds of changes.

The present is changes such as what you see with your eyes, what you can touch or feel. It is *sensed* changes of this sort.

The past is a different kind of change. It is not something you see, touch, feel, or smell when things are directly in front of you. But you do see, touch, and smell them in your images. The past is *imagery* changes and sensations.

The past is not "going back in time." There is

It's as though the
Future, Present, and Past
were brick like this:

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE

Somehow one brick has to
become the other brick.
The Future brick has to
become the Present brick.
It's an odd picture.

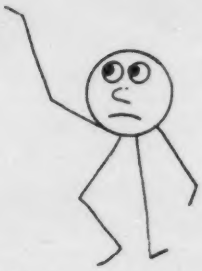
no time to back into. *The past is just a certain kind of "present" change.* The past is changes you "now" experience. The past differs from the present, only because it involves different kinds of changes.

People say, "The past is gone forever," or "You can't go back into the past." If this were true, we would never be able to study the past or know the past. But the past is not a thing. The past is just "present" changes of images or objects. All that a historian studies is certain yellow, wrinkled, dated papers he "now" sees. History is a present construction and collection of facts. We construct history today. We make history today.

By memory, or remembering, we refer to the past. "Remembrance of things past," is repetition, because remembrance already refers to the past. Here is a puzzle for you, then. If you can never go into the past, how do you know there is a past, and how do you know you are remembering? Did you like that? It gets worse.

Suppose you say, "I remember seeing my friend yesterday." This means you must have two images. One image of your friend yesterday and one image of your friend today. Right? I mean, if you now have just *one* seeing, then your friend is in front of you now. With memory, you are comparing a present image with a past image. Now, supposedly, *you can*

I see. Memory is really something we do in the present!



Eternity? Is that near Australia?

never go back into the past. So how can you have a past image? How can you, with memory, be comparing a present image with a past image? In summary, people say you cannot have past images in the present. Thus, "memory" is a confused idea. Had enough?

If time is change, you can find an easy solution to the problem. There is no past and, so, no past to go into. *Memory is just a certain kind of present change.* Now, you can see how *the view that time is change, can answer questions, solve problems, revise our thinking, and present an entirely different kind of world for us to live in.*

"Eternity," also, is only a certain kind of change. But it is a confused idea. Eternity refers, now, only to "present" kinds of change. *Eternity is a limited kind of thing we experience.* We mean by "eternal," "on and on," or "more and more." The trouble is, that all of the "on and on" experiences we have knowledge of, are limited. If a man has "infinite" wealth, it is not really "infinite." It is just "a lot" of money. "Eternal" is also a vague time word. To be clear about what it means, we may reduce it to some kind of changes within our everyday experience. "Eternity" is certainly not a place, although some people speak of it as if it were. Neither eternity, future, nor past are places. *Infinity is also a limited kind of change.*

We need not wonder
what it would be like to
live in a timeless world.
Our world is timeless!

Another way of putting this is that *if there is no time, we live in a timeless world.* We need not imagine clouds of time passing, or people swimming through time. We need not imagine a dark and distant past which is somehow gone, yet somehow still here. We need not imagine a future which has not happened yet. We need only see that the world: the past, present, future are merely different kinds of change. You now live in a world which is timeless.

"Now, let me raise my hand. I don't have a watch but I do have a question. I read this far, and it seemed like a long time, or a fat time, or whatever you want to call it."

That is *psychological time. It refers to what you think and feel.* You don't need a watch for that. Up to now we were only talking about clock or mechanical times. Here is an example of psychological time:

You are waiting on the corner for a friend. It is becoming cold and dark. You are somewhat afraid of the people who look at you as they pass by. Your friend comes, but is five minutes late. You say to your friend, "You are here at last, it seemed like an hour!"

You are again very lucky. Here is another nice puzzle for you. How late was your friend? One hour late, or five minutes late?

In terms of a clock change, she was only five minutes late. In terms of how you felt she was

Felt time is really
an emotion such as
boredom or excitement.

one hour late. The hour is a report of how you felt. That is psychological time. *Psychological time is only psychological change.* Remember, again, to put the word "change" for the word "time." That will help make it understandable.

But note. When she said, "It seemed like an hour," she is really saying "I didn't like standing here. It was cold and the people were unfriendly looking." In one sense, "It seemed like an hour," is not about time at all. It is a statement about her emotion. Psychological time is a report of one's thoughts and feelings. It is also a statement about what she thought the clock time was. If she felt bored, or fearful, she would think that the clock time was slow (a certain kind of change). In summary, *psychological time is a kind of felt change.*

Knowing this, means that one may guide his life less by a mechanical clock and more by his thoughts and feelings. If a person is a clock watcher his life can be very dull. He only pays attention to the little, metal hands moving around the clock. At best, this will make him dizzy. At worst, it will make him bored. Instead of guiding his life by mere mechanical clock time (change), he could guide his life by psychological time (change). He could pay attention to the things which are said in class, or the things which he could say and feel in order to make the class more interesting. There is

more to life than time.

Also, one need not eat merely because it is dinnertime or lunchtime. It may make more sense to eat because one is hungry, or he or she requires nourishment.

Some people are always in a hurry, or rush because they are confused about the difference between mechanical and psychological time. One solution to this is to ask, "What is my rush?"

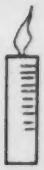
The rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland* may say, "No time to say 'Hello,' or 'Goodbye,' I'm late, I'm late, I'm late." But he may be in a hurry only for its own sake, or only to be in a hurry. He may not know what he is in a hurry for.

Thus if we are confused about what time is, it will affect both the psychological and mechanical parts of our lives, as well as our view of the world. We can learn to not let mechanical time (change) rule our lives without good reason. On the other hand, clock time (change) is a major help in allowing us to organize much of our activity.

Our world is much like Alice's. What we take to be our own familiar, everyday world is in some ways seen to be a curious Wonderland.

"HAVING A GOOD TIME" WITH TIME IN *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*

The Hatter, looking at his watch as if it might have stopped, asks what day of the month it is. Alice notices that the watch tells the day of the month but not what o'clock it is. There is a question as to whether we should call that a clock at all. A clock is an odd instrument in the sense that it measures change rather than time itself (if time exists). The hands of a clock move, and this movement we call change of time. But it is really a change of the positions of the hands. We do not ask how long it takes for the small hand of a watch to move one hour. That is, we would never know if a watch is slow, if there is only one watch in existence, and time is only the movement of the hands of that watch. (The standard of measure does not measure itself.) Now, there is no reason why a watch should measure hours instead of days. It serves the practical purpose of meeting our needs and corresponding to change we observe, such as day and night. We can make the instrument as detailed or as crude as we wish. It could measure weeks. An hour, a minute, and a second are arbitrary units of measurement. They could be different. That



A clock is just a certain change which we choose for our own practical purposes. A burning candle could be the standard of change (time).

depends on us and what purpose we are using them for. So why should a watch necessarily tell the hour any more than, as the Hatter suggests, a watch should tell the year? Alice replies that we don't need to tell the year by a watch because it stays the *same* year for such a long time. This situation is shown in the question as to how we know how long it takes for the small hand of a watch to move one hour. The Hatter replies in jest, that since a watch would stay the same for a long time to measure a year, his own watch, as it seems to have stopped, would measure a long period of time too. What that period is would be as hard to determine as time would be to determine with a broken watch.

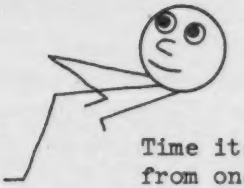
Actually, the Hatter may have been confused at first about whether his watch was working or not, since he would not be able to tell by glancing "every now and then" to see if it is working. It only records days of the month, so he would have to wait a day to tell if it is working. That he hears it tick may tell that the wheels are working, but not that the watch is correct. The hands may be stuck.

Now, it seems that in attempting to fix the watch with butter, the March Hare replied, "It was the *best* butter." And this is an interesting confusion. To think something is good in one

"What is time?" is an unanswerable riddle if we do not know what kind of answer would make sense. It doesn't make sense if we expect it to be something we can't have evidence for. "It is a mystical, invisible fluid," is not an intelligible answer.

circumstance tends to make us think it is good in every circumstance. Butter makes excellent pastry, often, but that does not mean it makes good lubrication—not even if the butter is the *best*. Someone may tell you he will give you "the best" or "something good," on a certain occasion, and you react positively without knowing what it is. It may be the best turnip. It may be the best turnip but not the best present. Or, again, we hear it said that whatever one does one should do it well. "Be excellent at whatever you do!" But being excellent, best, or good isn't in itself enough. You may be the best murderer—thief in the world. Or, we hear that one should pursue "the greatest good for the greatest number." But that does not help us determine what the "greatest good" is. Being good or the best, cannot in itself be an intelligible goal. (This reminds us of Alice's earlier quandry about how to get somewhere but not knowing where she wants to go.)

The notion that words are thought to name things, is applied to the word "time." Alice suggests that the Hatter "might do something better with the time than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers." To this, the Hatter replies, "If you knew Time as well as I do, you wouldn't talk about wasting *it*. It's *him*." The table is turned, here, on Alice. She objects



Time itself cannot change from one to two o'clock because there is no time as such. It cannot pass, go, or stop.

to riddles, but by talking of time as if it could be wasted, she creates her own puzzles. Is time neuter? Why not a male time? To take expressions like "Can you beat time?" literally would land Alice in difficulty.

Now, of course, if time is a man separate from clocks we have a confusion. We no longer know what time is. There is no standard to measure it, to know that it is there, much less to know that it is male. But that is just it, we never knew that it was an *it* rather than a *him*. Time need not be a thing, and there need not exist simple absolute time, or time which leaps, or time which passes from future to present to past neatly packaged as minutes and seconds. There need not be time in itself at all.

Alice says that if Time could change time "in a twinkling" to 1:30, her lunchtime, then she might not yet be hungry. What is odd here is:

1. the ability of time to change itself

2. the ability of time to change suddenly, for what would "suddenly" mean here?

3. the relationship between time and objects. Can time alone cause one to be hungry? If time is changed to 1:30 suddenly, are objects also changed? Can time exist independent of objects such that it can change without objects changing? Suppose that time changed from 9:30 to 1:30, but nothing else changed. We would

6
6
6
6
Tea time

never know that time so changed, and it would make no difference to anyone. 1:30 would still be treated as 9:30, and four hours later Alice would eat as usual.

We see that expressions we ordinarily use in regard to time make little sense if taken literally. The Queen of Hearts says, "He's murdering time!", which, although it sounds strange, could easily be a reference to our everyday expression, "killing time." The Hatter says that because he "killed time" by singing at someone else's (the Queen of Hearts') concert, Time "won't do a thing I ask! It's (He's) always six o'clock now." What could that mean? The situation is the same as above where time suddenly changed to 1:30. That is, everything will go on as usual and it doesn't matter whether or not the standard of time stops. What would affect things is if objects no longer changed.

Because six o'clock is tea time, and time has stopped, the Hatter mistakenly thinks what is done at that time must stop also. That is, he sets a table with many places supposing that he must have tea over and over, because time stopped at tea time.

One would think that if time stopped at 6:00, and if time is just change of objects, that then at 6:00 nothing would move. But that is not the case. The Hatter keeps having tea in what he

"While" and "duration"
are just more time words.
They are not things, but
changes.

calls "whiles." Tea time would be such a "while" or duration, and if time stopped here, we would have duration left, with change taking place in that duration. This is contradictory to the view that time is change. It suggests that time stops yet goes on; that change stops, yet goes on. Nearly every philosopher and scientist has had some say about the nature of time.

The Hatter explained to Alice why he was condemned (or rather condemned himself) to have one tea time over and over by going from tea cup to tea cup around the table. Alice asks, "But what happens when you come to the beginning again?" The meaninglessness of repeating a moment of having tea, and of reaching a beginning when time no longer "passes," lead the March Hare to change the subject. The theme of the riddle is thus continued: We say things we can't explain. Some ordinary seeming statements and expressions turn out to be useless and meaningless if taken literally. We are misled by thinking that words name things and by confusing different contexts. "Time passes" is not like "A train passes." And it is seen that just what time is, is somewhat of a paradox. One solution of the paradox might be that time as an entity in itself does not exist. "Time," "minute," "year," etc., do not name things. All we can observe is clock

If time is not change, what would it be like? Like an invisible ghost? Does it look like me?

hands changing position, day and night, change of planetary positions, or change or movement of objects (and possibly psychological change). But we do not observe time. Another solution might be that time means something but not one thing. What time and time words mean depends on their use. "Have a good time," means only "Have fun," and does not refer to, or name, or describe time. To find out what time is, then, we would merely look and see how time words are used in our everyday language. The examples given above, "Have a good time," and "He was killing time," indicate such usage.

What would the world be like if there were no humor in it?

JOKES ABOUT TIME

Humor can be a nice way of finding out about something. Time can be examined and clarified by making jokes about it. This is partly because humor is caused by making mistakes or false statements. We see that many of the things we usually think are true about time are false or are mistakes. What we often say about time are jokes which we do not realize are jokes. We can laugh and learn by our mistakes. Humor is a method of reasoning.

Here are some time jokes classified by various types of humor. Can you think of more jokes of each type?

Ambiguity Humor or Pun (Double meanings):

"Do clocks *tell* time?" "They tick, but they do not *tock*."

Circular Humor (Saying the same thing without knowing it.):

"The *Future will* tell." (also a pun.)

"I know there is a *Future* because it *will* appear to us."

"The *present* is *now*."

"There must be a *past*. I *remember* it."

"*When* is the *present*?"

"He is becoming *older* every *day*."

"My finger is bleeding! Oh, oh, oh, oh!"
"Have you pricked your finger?"
"I haven't pricked it yet," the Queen said, but I soon shall—oh, oh, oh!"

(Alice in Wonderland)

Context Deviation Humor (Mixing up different kinds of things.):

"Can you *hear* time pass? Does it make a *hum*? The tick-tock you hear is just the mechanical noises. It's not time. Time is not noisy."

"If time didn't pass, I'd still be eating lunch."

"Give Time a ticket for speeding."

"Time does not tick."

"Just one fat minute."

"Is time *soft*? Are you having a *hard* time answering?"

Contradiction Humor:

"Time is never a part of telling time."

"If you don't believe it's one o'clock, come back later and check."

"I knew what time was before you asked me."

"Of course, there is a present time. At least there was one yesterday."

"Forever is gone forever."

"There is no time anymore."

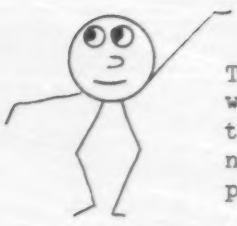
"The past is the present changes you are now experiencing."

"Historians study the presence of the past."

"I remember the future."

"Eternal now."

"The evidence for the past is that it is gone."



The philosopher, Wittgenstein, wrote, "My aim is to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent (obvious) nonsense."

"The evidence for the future is that it isn't here yet."

"We don't grow old in time. We just change."

"He has a great future behind him."

"The present is gone as soon as you begin to say 'now.' "

"Time began in time."

"Time slows down. It may even stop." (Can time slow down?)

Deviation from the Familiar Humor:

"Time does not exist."

"Time does not pass."

Deviation from Tradition Humor:

"Because time is change, and there is no time independent of change, clocks do not measure time."

Deviation from the Usual Humor:

"We can let a banana be our clock, be our standard of time (change)."

"Our clock can be a melting bar of candy, or the length of a cat's tail."

'Time marches on with its big feet and drum."

"Suppose you tried to save time in the same way you save money in a piggy bank? What would the pig think? It is no way to fatten up a pig. And it is no use saying, 'It takes *time* to fat-

Wittgenstein said that a whole and good book on critical philosophy could be written which consists of nothing but jokes.

ten a pig.' " (Please do not put food in the piggy bank.)

Defeated Expectation Humor (Expecting one thing, but being surprised to find another.):

"A strange new science fiction world without any time — our world."

False Reason Humor:

"Sorry I'm late, but time slowed down."

Blatant Honesty Humor (Being too direct.):

"Time? It's nothin'."

Ignorance Humor:

"O.K., sure, it's a good watch, but it only measures Swiss time."

"Time is minutes and seconds and all like dat."

"If the clock stops at one o'clock, it will always be one o'clock. I hope it will stop while I'm doing something that is fun."

Taking Things Literally Humor:

"I opened the door, and *my time ran out on me*."

"Take your time." "I already have some."

"We lost a lot of time." "I'll help you find it."

"Time is the shadow moving around a sundial, but it's too dark to see it."

It is obvious now that our language can confuse us. Wittgenstein wrote that his aim in philosophy is "to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle."

"Sure, you say there is the Future, but have you ever seen a bus saying, 'To the Future'?"

"If time passes, what does it pass?"

"Why did you buy a watch instead of the medicine?" "Because I heard that time cures all."

"Why did you whisper?" "Because time will tell."

"Time is left-handed." (Some scientists say this.)

"If we 'save time,' we will never grow old."

"Sorry, you cannot have tea. It's coffee time."

"I know you are full, but you have to eat. It's dinner time."

"I was a waiter in prison. I served time for six years."

"When an alcoholic opens his bottle, *his time runs out*."

Metaphor Humor (Combination of two seemingly unlike things. They may really be alike in some way.)

"Time is change."

"Time is not *when* you get up. It is the change of getting up. Your getting up is time."

"Time does not fly, march, walk, sing, pass, or stuff pigs." (also a reduction to absurdity.)

"Time is change. Thus time is what you do. It is your walking, thinking, moving, reading, eating, nothing more."

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Obvious Statement Humor:

"This may be difficult to follow. Here is how you tell time. First obtain a watch. Next notice that the hands of the watch move or change. When the long hand is on twelve and the short hand is on one, we say it is one o'clock." (But there is no time as such so you never do tell it.)

Paradox Humor:

"The present is your own actions. Time is you."

Perceptual Humor:

A leap in time:

Direction of time:

Personification Humor (Treat animals or things as if they were people, or treating people as if they were animals or things.):

"We guide human experience by moving pieces of metal in clocks." (dehumanization)

"She tried to tell Time, but it wouldn't listen."

"The ants were late for supper."

"Ants don't have *whens*."

"Do dogs have futures?"

"The jury eagerly wrote down all three dates on their slates, and then added them up, and reduced the answer to shillings and pence."

(Alice in Wonderland)

Reduce to Absurd Humor:

"To check your watch, just relate it to time itself."

"You mean you guide your life by those silly, little, moving pieces of metal on your wrist?"

Reversal Humor (Reverse ideas or turn sentences around.):

"He measures sand going through an hourglass by the hardness of a boiling egg."

"The present, which we think we know best, is what we know least. No matter how short it is, it is either future or past."

"The scientist, Newton, once put his watch in a kettle, and timed it with an egg."

"Time measures clocks."

"We live in a timeless world."

"If there is just one clock in the world, and that clock is the standard time, then if that clock stops, time stops." (also riddle or paradox.)

Riddle Humor:

"What gets lost and saved but is never seen?" Answer: "Time."

"What flies but is not a bird?" Answer: "Time."

"What marches but has no feet?" Answer: "Time."

"What is in the past and future simultaneously?" Answer: "Time."

"What can be beaten, killed, yet have no bruises and still live?" Answer: "Time."

Simile or Analogy Humor (Asks, "What is it like?"):

"Is telling time like telling a tale?"

"Is telling time like telling a cat to get off a fence?"

"Are you in time like you are in the room?"

"Are you in time like you are surrounded by air? Do you breathe time?"

"Do you swim in time as you swim in water? Or, is it a timeless swim?"

Sinking Humor (relate the important to the trivial or valueless):

"If I went an infinite distance how could I send a return postcard? (also is reduced to absurdity humor)

Stereotype Humor (Thinking or acting which is too fixed and narrow, or too habitual):

Impatient person who just arrived: "Well, I guess I'd better be running along now."

If you follow any of these arguments about time it shows that you can be critical and even do critical philosophy. Philosophy is just careful, critical thinking and clarification of ideas.

Substitution Humor (Replace wrong, or unusual words, for the usual words.):

"A *grief* ago."

"Your *past* is showing."

We can let any change be the standard of time, even a banana: "Three o'banana," "Twelve o'banana," "Hurry up, it's getting spotty out."

Blatant Vice Humor (Revealing your faults or vices.):

"It's ridiculous to ask what time is. Just repeat the hackneyed phrases and slogans we all use."

"If you still can't understand what time is, keep reading and talk about it with a friend. Or, just talk to your friend and forget the whole thing. Or, pretend you know even when you don't, or explain it all to someone as if you knew, or just tell a few time jokes and have a laugh."